

Community Facilities

This chapter of the *Comprehensive Plan* describes the City's approach to providing major facilities and services. Attractive public facilities are important to maintaining the confidence in the community of homeowners and business people. Schools, libraries, parks, and other facilities are all highly valued by residents and are important factors in where to buy or rent a place to live.

These and other facilities and services will help sustain the community through the inevitable cycles of deterioration and reinvestment, so the City should invest in them as generously as it can. The public sector should provide leadership in developing facilities that exemplify quality in design, construction, and maintenance. Besides helping build a sustainable community, attractive public facilities also build community pride.

Other chapters of the *Comprehensive Plan* also set forth policies pertaining to the importance of providing appropriate and attractive community facilities for the citizens of Eau Claire. Such chapters include: Land Use, Parks System, Transportation, and Downtown.

Key Issues

1. **New Public Safety Facility:** What should the City do to ensure public safety facilities are best located to serve future growth and development of the community?
2. **School-park Concept:** To what extent should the City continue to support the strategy of co-locating a neighborhood park with each elementary school?
3. **Community Center:** What should the City do to evaluate and address existing and future needs for a community center or similar facility offering an indoor aquatic center, gymnasiums, recreational courts, meeting rooms, and similar uses?
4. **Convention Center:** What should the City do to address the continuing discussion in the community about locating, building, and funding a major public assembly facility for conferences, conventions, and events?
5. **Sharing Facilities and Services:** What should the City do to foster more effective intergovernmental collaboration to share community facilities and services?

Goal and Objectives

Goal: Locate and maintain public facilities and services so as to support the goals of compact growth, neighborhood revitalization, and sustainable new neighborhood design.

Objective 1 – Cost-effective and High-quality Facilities: Provide public facilities in a cost-effective manner and build them to a high standard of quality.

Objective 2 – Police and Fire Services: Continue to provide a high level of police and fire services.

Objective 3 – Schools: Coordinate urban growth, particularly new parks, with public elementary, middle, and high schools.

Objective 4 – Community Recreation Facility: Continue to study the need and feasibility of creating a multi-purpose community building for recreation and meetings.

Objective 5 – Convention and Events Center: Continue to study the need and feasibility of a County-owned convention and conference center.

Objective 6 – Chippewa Valley Regional Airport: Seek to ensure that efforts of the Chippewa Valley Regional Airport to maintain and improve passenger and freight services will not adversely impact adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Objective 7 – Other Facilities and Services: Continue to cooperate with private companies and other units of government to provide necessary and desired facilities or services used by the broad community.

Community Facilities Policies

Objective 1 – Cost-effective and High-quality Facilities

Provide public facilities in a cost-effective manner and build them to a high standard of quality.

Providing cost-effective public facilities and services is always a worthwhile objective for any city. However, that does not mean doing things for the least possible cost. High quality public facilities and services are also important because they support private investment in neighborhoods, help retain residents and businesses, and build community pride and quality of life.

An important factor in the City's ability to sustain long-term fiscal health will be the way in which it manages growth and redevelopment. Expanding the tax base without over-committing to expenses will help pay for the facilities and services that help renew the city and attract new residents and businesses.

Policies:

1. **High Quality:** Construct and maintain facilities to the highest level of quality possible. Since public facilities represent a collective effort of the entire community, they should be of high quality and demonstrate the expressed desire for an improved environment. In doing this, the public provides leadership in enhancing the urban environment.
2. **Shared Facilities and Services:** Work to increase shared services and facilities to the extent that it does not harm the City financially and it improves the quality of the service or facility to the citizens of Eau Claire.

When feasible, the City and related agencies will build facilities that can serve more than one purpose. Land and facilities shared between schools and parks, or storm water facilities and parks, are examples of this principle.

3. **Compact Growth:** Provide facilities and services with the intention of promoting compact, orderly urban growth, and neighborhood revitalization. The location of community facilities should always be consistent with plans for future growth and development and should promote growth in the City of Eau Claire.

Objective 2 – Police and Fire Services

Continue to provide a high level of police and fire services.

Police and fire services are two fundamental and highly expensive services provided by the City of Eau Claire. Since the surrounding counties and the adjacent City of Altoona also provides these services, Eau Claire will seek economies through cooperation.

Policies:

1. **Community Policing:** Investigate funding opportunities that would enable the re-establishment of the Community Policing Program within the Water Street area and the North River Fronts Neighborhood, as well as other neighborhoods abutting Downtown.
2. **Fringe Fire and Security Protection:** Continue the practice of evaluating the cost of providing additional police and fire protection against the long-term benefits of annexation.
3. **Police Headquarters:** Continue to jointly study the feasibility of an expanded County building that includes space for a new Eau Claire Police Department.

The *City Center Plan* (1995) and the *Historic Randall Park Neighborhood Plan* call for expansion of the County building to the east of the existing facility along Ann Street, away from the existing neighborhood to the west. The County has acquired land and provided parking lot expansion to the east of the courthouse consistent with these plans. An expansion feasibility study was initiated in 2004, and a new building is needed by 2007.

Objective 3 – Schools

Coordinate urban growth, particularly new parks, with public elementary, middle, and high schools.

The locations of the public elementary, middle, and high schools are shown by Figure 9-1, Major Community Facilities. Locations of potential public school sites shown on Figure 2-1, Planned Land Use, are only conceptual. All future public schools in the City's Extraterritorial Review Area must be in locations that can be served by sewer and water lines from Eau Claire.

Policies:

- 1. Cooperation between the City and the School District:** Continue to cooperate with the Eau Claire Area School District for mutual benefit by locating schools and parks adjacent to one another. The two will work together to revitalize neighborhoods through housing rehabilitation assistance, street maintenance, policing, parks, and attractive neighborhood schools.
- 2. Park-school Concept:** Pair parks with elementary and middle schools to the extent possible and use to enhance older, established neighborhood and future districts.
- 3. Older Neighborhood Schools:** Encourage the Eau Claire Area School District to maintain schools in the older neighborhoods and find sites in older neighborhoods when replacement sites are needed.

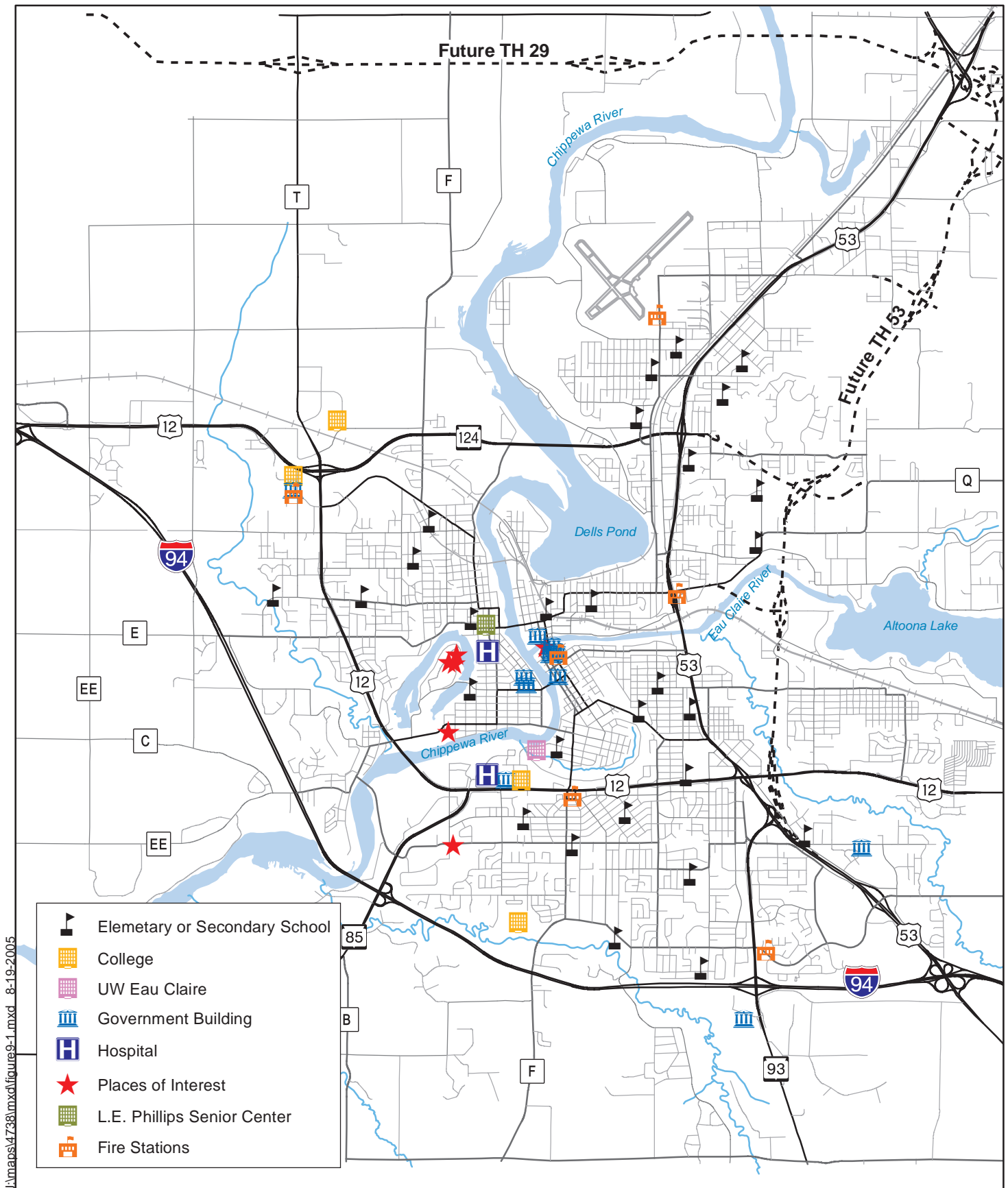
Objective 4 – Community Recreation and Meeting Building

Continue to study the need and feasibility of creating a multi-purpose community building for recreation and meetings.

Some communities (particularly with long winters) are providing an indoor community center facility with an aquatic center, gymnasium, and other facilities. This type of facility has been informally discussed by City officials and was raised as an issue within the 1993 *Comprehensive Plan*.

Policies:

- 1. Study and Keep Options Open:** Continue to evaluate the need for a building to provide an indoor water park, gymnasiums, and meeting rooms. In 2004-2005, the City's financial situation was not conducive to moving forward with this idea, although it is considered a desirable and appropriate longer-term public facility for Eau Claire. The degree to which other facilities in Eau Claire, such as at the YMCA, the schools, the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, or those provided by the private sector, meet those needs will be considered in the cost and benefit analysis. Private sources of funding should also be studied.



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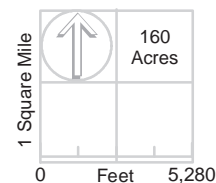


Figure 9-1
Major Community
Facilities

A possible site for this building would be near the southern tip of Carson Park at the intersection of Menomonie Street and Carson Park Drive.

Objective 5 – Convention and Events Center

Continue to study the need and feasibility of a County-owned convention and conference center.

The 1995 *City Center Plan* called for a feasibility study on the location of a multi-purpose facility or convention center at the present RCU office building site. A referendum on this study failed and the facility was not built. A 1987 study was also conducted on the feasibility of a convention center within the community. As the City grows, the question will return.

Policies:

1. **Assess Feasibility:** Cooperate with Eau Claire and Chippewa Counties to assess the feasibility of constructing a convention and events center in the Greater Eau Claire area. A city center site would be one alternative location to be considered in such a study. The impacts and benefits on surrounding businesses and properties should be a consideration in such a study.

Objective 6 – Chippewa Valley Regional Airport

Seek to ensure that efforts of the Chippewa Valley Regional Airport to maintain and improve passenger and freight services will not adversely impact adjacent residential neighborhoods.

The Chippewa Valley Regional Airport is owned and operated by the Chippewa Valley Airport Commission, a semi-autonomous agency. Cooperation between the Commission and City will be important for beneficial co-existence, the growth of Eau Claire, and increased airport operations.

Policies:

1. **Compatible Expansion:** Encourage the Chippewa Valley Regional Airport to plan its facilities cooperatively with the City and give due consideration to the adjacent neighborhood.

Means of mitigating visual impacts include plantings and berms, building placement, and facade treatments. The Airport Commission should be required to soundproof or acquire nearby properties that are located within noise contours indicated by the rules of the Federal Aviation Administration as being unacceptable for housing.

Any further airport improvements should be made contingent on additional actions that will safeguard or enhance the quality of the adjacent neighborhood and minimize adverse effects on nearby roads, bridges, and utilities. (See also the Transportation Chapter.)

Objective 7 – Other Facilities and Services

Continue to cooperate with private companies and other units of government to provide necessary and desired facilities or services used by the broad community.

Some key services or facilities are licensed or indirectly regulated by the City, sometimes in cooperation with another body of government, such as the State or County.

Policies:

1. **Telecommunications:** Acknowledge the importance of telecommunications for the convenience of residents and the conduct of commerce. Private antennae, towers, satellite dishes, retransmitters, and related structures will continue to be allowed and regulated through the Zoning Ordinance as either accessory uses, or conditional uses, depending on the nature of the facility.

Eau Claire will also continue to cooperate with private telecommunications companies who request to install lines in public road rights-of-way while imposing reasonable controls on their design, location, and installation.

2. **Child Day Care:** Continue to allow childcare facilities through the Zoning Ordinance as conditional uses, including any regulations that may be imposed by the State of Wisconsin through its required license.
3. **Solid Waste Recycling and Disposal:** Continue to conduct solid waste collection and recycling through private companies licensed by the City. Dispose of solid waste that is not recycled at the sanitary landfill. Continue to allow recycling facilities in all commercial or industrial districts by conditional use permit.
4. **Power Generation and Transmission:** Continue to work with Xcel Energy and other energy providers to ensure the continued supply of electricity, natural gas, and other energy sources to the City and the region.

Xcel Energy operates a coal-fired electricity generation plant located in the Town of Wheaton and operates a water-powered turbine at the Dells Dam. There is a major transformer facility north of the plant along the Chippewa River near Dells Pond, and a major transmission line runs east-west across the city south of U.S. 124.

Wind energy conversion systems are allowed by conditional use permit in all zoning districts.